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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-seventh year

Identical letters dated 18 June 2012 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

It is with regret that I must draw your attention to the fact that this past week the Palestinian people solemnly marked the fifth year since the imposition of Israel's illegal blockade against the Gaza Strip. This immoral, inhumane blockade has been imposed by the occupying Power since June 2007, in collective punishment of the over 1.6 million Palestinian civilians living there, in deliberate, grave breach of international law, specifically the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits the occupying Power from collectively punishing protected persons and prohibits pillaging and reprisals against them and their property (article 33), and article 50 of the Hague Regulations, recognized by the international community as customary international law, as well as in violation of the population's basic human rights.

The repeated international calls on Israel, the occupying Power, to end this suffocating, destructive land, air and sea blockade have gone unheeded, and Israel continues to obstruct the free movement of persons and goods, including essential humanitarian goods, reconstruction materials and commercial flows. As a result, the humanitarian and socioeconomic situation in Gaza Strip remains critical and the fabric of Palestinian life there continues to be gravely impaired. After half a decade of this collective punishment, poverty and unemployment are rampant; malnutrition is prevalent in the majority of children; vital civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, electric power plants, roads, and water and sanitation systems, is deteriorating into disrepair or remains damaged or destroyed as a result of the December 2008-January 2009 Israeli military aggression; reconstruction has barely progressed; and the economy and normal commerce are in tatters, with ongoing restrictions preventing sustainable economic growth.

Gaza also continues to be the target of Israeli military strikes on civilian areas and fishing boats that have caused death and injury to civilians and more destruction

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of properties. In this regard, Israeli airstrikes launched today killed two Palestinian men near Beit Hanoun and were preceded by missile strikes on an area in Rafah, on Sunday, 17 June, that caused injury to at least five other people, including a woman and child. Palestinian farmers in Gaza and fishermen also continue to be targeted by Israeli gunfire and artillery, a constant threat to their safety and their livelihoods.

The situation in Gaza thus remains precarious, with any normalcy of life precluded by the occupying Power's repressive and violent measures. As documented by various United Nations agencies, including, inter alia, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the occupied Palestinian territory, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the World Health Organization (WHO) and other international organizations, at least 44 per cent of Palestinians in Gaza are food insecure and 80 per cent are aid dependent. Unemployment remains high, affecting at least 34 per cent of the population, including over half of youth. It is also estimated that 38 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line as livelihoods continue to be undermined. Severe restrictions on exports continue, and access to 35 per cent of farmland and 85 per cent of fishing waters is completely or partially restricted, resulting, inter alia, in the loss of an estimated 75,000 metric tons of produce yearly and loss of income for approximately 35,000 people dependent on the fishing industry. Access to education and medical treatment outside of Gaza and family visits to Palestinians from Gaza imprisoned by Israel also continue to be obstructed. Moreover, the well-being of the population and environmental conditions continue to be seriously impacted by power outages up to 12 hours a day owing to fuel and electricity shortages, the daily dumping of 90 million litres of untreated sewage into the sea, and the fact that over 90 per cent of the water from the Gaza aquifer is unsafe for human consumption without treatment.

We are grateful for the international community's consistent demand that Israel, the occupying Power, bring an end to this unjust situation and for redress of this man-made humanitarian disaster. The calls on Israel to lift the blockade and allow for the sustained, regular movement of people and goods to and from Gaza and the restoration of its link with the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the calls and substantial support for the reconstruction of Gaza must not relent. In this regard, we draw attention to, and express deep gratitude for, the joint appeal recently issued, on 14 June 2012, by 50 international aid groups and United Nations agencies calling on Israel to lift the blockade. In that appeal, the signatories stated, inter alia: "For over five years in Gaza, more than 1.6 million people have been under blockade in violation of international law. More than half of these people are children. We the undersigned say with one voice: 'end the blockade now'."

We call on Israel, the occupying Power, to heed the will of the international community and to act forthwith in accordance with its obligations under international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, and relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), to end this blockade of the Gaza Strip and to cease its violation of the human rights of our people there. Israel cannot be absolved of its legal obligations at the expense of the lives, well-being and livelihood of the more than 1.6 million Palestinians, who are being brutally subjected to such harsh and prolonged collective punishment. The international community, including the United Nations, must respect its legal obligations in this regard and act collectively, bearing in mind the above moral appeal by agencies and international organizations representing a wide segment of

humanitarian and human rights groups from around the world, to help to bring a definitive end to this unjust situation afflicting the Palestinian people in Gaza.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 429 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 7 June 2012 (A/ES-10/557-S/2012/410) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Feda Abdelhady **Nasser**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.